

## Message Text

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TAGS: SCUL, OEXC, IZ, US

SUBJ: CULTURAL EVENTS OF INTEREST TO IRAQIS

REF: (A) BAGHDAD 1289, (B) STATE 153237

1. SUMMARY: MUHANNAD KASSIM KHALIL, FONMIN DIRECTOR, CULTURAL DIVISION, RECENTLY DISCUSSED CULTURAL EVENTS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO IRAQ WITH USINT OFFICER. KHALIL REGRETTED HISTORY OF TARDY RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC U.S. SUGGESTIONS FOR CULTURAL CONTACTS, BUT OBSERVED THAT POOR ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITY AND COORDINATION BETWEEN FONMIN, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, AND RAPIDLY EXPANDING MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION HAD AFFECTED IRAQI CULTURAL CONTACTS WITH ALL NATIONS. GOI IS NOW TAKING A HARD LOOK AT CULTURAL POLICY AND EXPECTS THAT HIGH-LEVEL INTERESTS, COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS (SEE REF A) AND MORE EXPERIENCED MIN OF HIGHER EDUCATION WILL SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE GOI ABILITY TO RESPOND TO OTHER NATIONS PROPOSALS FOR COOPERATION IN THE CULTURAL FIELD.

2. IN COURSE OF GENERAL DISCUSSION, FOLLOWING TOPICS WERE REVIEWED: A) ECFMG EXAMINATION, B) U.S. PARTICIPATION IN TOYNBEE CONFERENCE, C) EXCHANGE OF STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS BETWEEN U.S. AND IRAQI UNIVERSITIES, AND D) IRAQI RESPONSE TO EXHIBITION IN BAGHDAD OF ISLAMIC ART FROM METROPOLITAN MUSEUM'S COLLECTION. KHALID MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

3. ALTHOUGH GOI WOULD LIKE TO BE FORTHCOMING TO USINT' REQUEST FOR FONMIN COMMENTS REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ECFMG EXAM BY USINT, IRAQI DOCTORS ARE

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REGARDED AS AN EXTREMELY PRECIOUS COMMODITY AND ARE USUALLY

CAREFULLY CONFINED TO IRAQ. THE MINISTRIES OF HEALTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION ARE APPARENTLY FORMULATING CAREFUL, BUT POSITIVE, RESPONSE TO OUR PROPOSAL TO ADMINISTER EXAM.

4. GOI HAS, FOR REASONS THAT ARE NOT CLEAR, POSTPONED TOYNBEE CONFERENCE. NONETHELESS RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES CONTINUE TO HOPE MALCOLM KERR AND OTHERS FROM THE U.S. REMAIN INTERESTED IN TOYNBEE CONFERENCE.

5. AS FOR THE WCHANGE OF PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS, IRAQ IS NOW WILLING TO CONSIDER ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS. FIRST MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION MAY BE AN INCREASING NUMBER OF REQUESTS BY INDIVIDUAL IRAQI UNIVERSITIES FOR U.S. PROFESSORS TO GIVE SHORT (APPROXIMATELY ONE MONTH) COURSES ON TECHNICAL SUBJECTS.

6. PROPOSED EXHIBIT OF ISLAMIC ART HAS FALLEN BETWEEN THE CRACKS OF DIFFERENT MINISTRIES AND NOT AROUSED GREAT INTEREST ON PART OF LOCAL ARTISTIC COMMUNITY. AN EXHIBIT OF MODERN AMERICAN ART WOULD BE EXTREMELY WELL RECEIVED IN BAGHDAD.

7. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF KHALIL'S POSITIVE REMARKS, IT MAY TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS FOR GOI TO COORDINATE APPROACH TO CULTURAL CONTACTS WITH U.S. AS IT NOW STANDS, FONMIN REDIRECTS OUR INQUIRIES TO MIN. OF HIGHER EDUCATION, WHICH HAS RECENTLY MOVED AND REMAINS DISORGANIZED, OR MIN. OF INFORMATION. ALL CONTACTS WITH U.S. REQUIRE HIGH LEVEL APPROVAL WITHIN GOI. LOWER LEVEL OFFICIALS ARE THEREFORE RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY AND GOI OFTEN SIMPLY DOES NOT RESPOND TO USINT PROPOSALS FOR CULTURAL CONTACTS. KHALIL APPARENTLY SEES FONMIN ROLE AS INSISTING ON TIMELY AND RATIONAL GOI RESPONSES TO OTHER NATIONS' INITIATIVES.  
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